1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

name because its founder and members, whenever grain was being given out, were found always to have extra long tail flaps (here pronounced *toks*) to their loin-cloths. A broader-woven cloth makes it possible for it to be taken once round the waist in its full unfolded width, so as to cover the buttocks and private parts. The *toga* hangs sometimes over the left buttock, and, in the south of the hills, sometimes in front of the body in the Godavari fashion.

Tucked into the girdle or the loin-cloth are knives with or without wooden sheaths, razors (as already seen), hollow bamboo tubes filled with tobacco, or little tobacco boxes of carved wood or tree-seeds, or of basketry (the last kind is sometimes worn on the left shoulder on a cord passing round the neck and under the left arm-pit); a comb may hang over the buttock from a cord; and occasionally on the Dantewara side a larger knife approximating to the *banda* or dao used by the Bison-horn Marias and Parjas.

The older Marias wear no cloth on their heads, and no ornaments in their hair. But it is general now to wear an apology for a *pagri* or turban consisting of one folded Mahra cloth wound round the forehead and tied at the back of the head. Youths wear between this and the back or side of their heads tail feathers of jungle-cock, hornbill or raquet-tailed drongo (which they stick into their crown-tuft knots if they have no *pagri*). This head-cloth is often dirty and worn, and looks suspiciously like all that is left of an old friend of a loin-cloth.

Men and women almost invariably go unshod; but occasionally a pair of very coarse sandals of untanned cowskin with a thong over the big toe and another over the four small toes is worn, generally only when there is a cut or a heel-crack to be protected from the ground.

Short of complete nakedness, man could hardly wear less than the Hill Maria in his most primitive state. His scanty frontal covering often leaves little to the imagination in its utter inadequacy. But it is to the fact that he wears so little that he owes it that he is far freer from scabies, itch and ringworm than the Bison-horn Maria, and the Murias and others of the plains, who more and more are imitating Hindu clothes, but are too poor to afford either much washing or spare suits. At the numerous State dispensaries these are the commonest complaints, and treatment is useless because the patients will not leave off the dirty, infected clothing. Luckily, coat and 'waskat' are still rarities in the hills; Bardal Chamru of Kutul, the headman or *majhi* of Bardal *pargana*, and his brother Bardal Boranga, who used to accompany me when I toured near their villages, always arrived coated and waistcoated above their loin-cloths, but would discard the obnoxious and unnecessary

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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292 garments as soon as possible. In their youth they had been sent with a party of men and women as exhibits to the Allahabad Exhibition, where Boranga had celebrated his marriage *coram publico Indico*; they brought back with them from Allahabad a bigger suspicion of the *Kosor*, as they, like Gonds all over the Central Provinces, call all Hindus, a coat and waistcoat and blankets, and a taste for *kappu* or opium which luckily was not inherited by Baranga's son, the present headman, or any of the villagers.

291 As in Glasfurd's day, the women go with breasts uncovered. Very old women occasionally hobble about inside their huts completely naked. The square patch of cloth suspended between the legs from a waist-cord on which bamboo rings were strung, which Glasfurd saw as the sole garment of some children and elderly women, is the garment known as *mudang*, worn only by females. It is to-day definitely intimate underwear, to be seen by no one save the husband, except in the case of very little girls who, when six or so, wear it for the first time as their only garment. Brass rings made by the Ghasia (Gharwa) brass-workers in bazaar places in the plains such as Gidam, Dhaurai and Narainpur, have replaced the bamboo rings of Glasfurd's time. The cord on which they are strung is sometimes a thin piece of cane. A mother buys a few rings for her little girls whenever she has a pice or two to spare at her visits to the markets; and the cord becomes nearly full of rings when the girl is nubile. The *mudang* cord is never removed, even at child-birth. The cloth attached to it is usually a strip of old rag torn off a worn-out loin-cloth. It has already been stated that women keep it on when bathing. The *mudang* is buried or burned with the woman.

The cord full of rings is obvious under the top of every woman's loin-cloth, as a sort of ridge. The cloth itself is folded over the rings, and hangs down all round over the loins and buttocks, without being passed between the legs. It is therefore not revealing like the men's cloth. Occasionally women wear a small sheet thrown [117] carelessly across the breasts and over the left shoulder in imitation of the custom gradually spreading in the Bison-horn country; and [854] a cloth of this kind is used for supporting a baby, who rides on his mother's right or left hip with the cloth drawn tight over his little buttocks and up to his armpits and thence fastened over her other shoulder. Even for dancing a woman has no other clothes.

301 Glasfurd noted in 1862 that few of the Hill Marias possessed the beads that other Marias liked so much. The older men still wear little of this kind; a few have a single necklet of dirty yellow beads made of small chopped sections of pea-fowl's lower leg-bone about 5 mm. in length. Occasionally

Ornaments

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

301 from behind, it makes her appear very thick-, in fact bull-necked, and creates a false impression of her often slender build.

304 What beauty the girls have they mar to Western eyes by excessive tattooing over all the face and forehead, and often the breasts also. Mothers begin to tattoo their daughters when they are eight or nine years old, using lengths of the brass wire used for the rings in the helix of the ear, sharpened into rough needles, and black charcoal powder. The girl lies on her side with one cheek flat on the ground while the mother operates on the other cheek. Sometimes only one breast is tattooed, often neither. They seem never to tattoo legs or arms, though Glasfurd speaks of their arms and thighs being covered with tattooing. A swastika with the corners slightly rounded and not right-angled, and a pair of very small parallel vertical lines between each arm is a common motive, on face and breast. On the centre of the forehead, vertically one below the other, are usually tattooed a circle with a dot in the centre, for the sun, a circle and a crescent for the full and crescent moon respectively. Thence fairly symmetrically vertical hatching alternates with horizontal round and round the face, becoming oblique at the corners and down the sides of the nose; and over the corners of the cheekbones three dots are made triangle-wise. This is only one common pattern. The only tattooing on men is single, double or treble horizontal rows of dots, varying in number from three to nine, over the glabella. I did not ascertain at what age or by whom these marks are made. There are no special tattoo marks for the different clans. There seems to be no significance behind tattooing; it is considered merely an adornment. The Nagpur Gonds speak of tattooing as marks by which ancestors and clan-gods can identify [775] persons in the next world; but the Marias have no formulated idea of another world.

● 292 535 The dancing dress of the Hill Maria men is completely different from that of the Bison-horn Marias and most other tribes. The women have no special dancing dress. The young men wear on their heads either red and white turbans, or, more often, curious Chinese fig-box head-dresses which they call by the Hindi word *topi*, covered with red or blue cloth, and piped at the edges and centre with peacock feather quills. Often a peacock, jungle-cock, hornbill or raquet-tailed drongo's feather is stuck in the *topi*, or spiral coils of feather quill fastened on both sides of a stick; or scarlet 'Scissors' cigarette packets found empty at the bazaars, lead seals from petrol tins, old brass cog-wheels from watches, little tins, cheap mirrors, the round of bright tin-foil cut out when an airtight cigarette tin is opened; dried snipe or woodcock neck and skull; or anything bright-coloured or interesting to the Maria.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

PLATE VII

Hill Maria dancers. Note, in 2, the use of bark rain-coat as dancing skirt
(*Photographs by Mr. K. L. B. Hamilton, C.I.E., I.C.S.*)

Hill Maria dancers, showing dancing-crinkle and bunches of pellet-bells worn over the rump

A Hill Maria of Kurmar, using his rain-hat and rain-shield, as he works with his *godavi* digging hoe

[Facing p. 74]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

292 535 Sometimes the 'fig-box' is made of a lattice of split bamboo strips. Generally a streamer or two of red or blue cloth hangs down from the back of the *topi* or turban. Over the chest a sort of sleeveless vest of red cloth is worn, almost neck-high, and over this from breast to waist, strands of white cloth are twisted, back and front, so as to produce a rib-like effect, the ribs radiating from a central double plait of cloth running vertically from navel to breast, then passing on either side of the neck and repeating the pattern in the rear. The 'ribs' vary from five to nine in number, according to the means or taste of the dancer. This cloth arrangement is known as *gatikar-kawa*. Below is worn a long skirt of red-edged white or dark blue cotton, called a *kachi*, with a white or coloured sash round the waist over the bottom of the 'ribs' and the top of the skirt; the sash is called *poriya*. Over the sash round the waist runs a cord, from which is suspended over the rump a great bunch of large and small pellet-bells (*muyang*), in the middle of which two or three large clapper-bells often are prominent. From the neck is hung over the back of the shoulders a basketry dancing-shield or *mogh*, made to slant downwards away from the back by two hoops of bamboo protruding underneath. Over the top of the shield either streamers of coloured cloth reaching nearly to the ground, or peacock's tails are looped. 292 535 285 The shield is made of two targes of twined basketry joined together so that the rough edges are in the middle; the warps are flat slices of bamboo about 13 mm. wide, radiating from the centre of the targes, and the wefts, the twining of which begins from the centre, are for the most part thin rods of bamboo pared to the thickness of a straw; but at intervals bands of red are made on the targes by using red yarn from the markets as wefts for three or four rounds of twining; flakes of shining mica are worked into this yarn, and over the outermost red band often cowry shells are sewn. The ends of the bamboo hoops are forced through the joined targes and held either by horizontal pieces of bamboo tied across them, or by ornamental studs of *cire-perdue* brass-work. 292 535 When not in use, the dancing-shield is never kept inside the house, but either sewn up in leaves and hung high in the boughs of a tree, or on the outer wall of the *manda* or granary under the eaves; this is to protect it from smoke, sun and rain. Each dancer makes his own dancing head-dress and shield. Formerly every dancer held in his left hand the handle of an axe, of which the head, decked with coloured cloth streamers, protruded behind his back; and the axe was a *pharsi* with blade shaped like vulture wings. Now even the ordinary Maria workaday axe is ceasing to be used, a twisted tree-root, or plume of peacock feathers with the stalks plaited together in a basketry pattern, or a stick, taking its place.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

292 535 178 This dress was in regular use in every village in Metabhum until a year or two ago. At my last visit in March 1934, I was amazed to find that, almost as in obedience to some decree that had gone forth, the youth of the hills had abandoned the rib-dress, the shield and the gaily-coloured head-dress and skirt, sometimes wearing in lieu cheap bazaar singlets and a *dhoti*, retaining, however, the buttock-bells, the songs and the dance-steps. The older men all said that it was a spontaneous decision of the younger generation, decided upon because of the cost of buying the expensive yards of cloth needed for the dress; but this would not account for the abandonment of the shield, which they make themselves, and for which peacock tails are better than cloth streamers. Many have actually thrown away their cloth and shields. But some still think it necessary to hang them up round fresh graves, and I found that all the youths still know how to make them, and were willing to make them in camp. In 1932 a rumour went through all the tribes 203 184 178 of Jeypore and spread thence into Bastar that a god had descended on one of the mountains of the Eastern Ghats and commanded all men to give up keeping black poultry and goats, wearing clothes or using umbrellas or blankets with any black in them, and using beads or articles made of aluminium alloy. The message was rapidly bruited abroad, and everywhere villages had '*bohorani*' ceremonies for purifying themselves from disease, and cast out black goats, cocks, hens, umbrellas, blankets, 'waskats', beads, aluminium ornaments and domestic utensils on the village boundary. Mohammedans began to make a good thing out of slaughtering the goats or exporting them. Strenuous propaganda by the State soon stopped this impoverishing rumour, and some of the villagers in the end recovered much of their property from the police, who had been ordered to take charge of it. At the time, the Bison-horn Marias seemed to have been only a little affected and the Hill Marias not at all; possibly this sudden abandonment of the most picturesque features of their dancing costume may be a late repercussion. Such sudden moves amongst Indian primitive tribes are not uncommon; the Gonds of Nagpur and adjacent districts a few years ago suddenly decided to give up keeping poultry and pigs as a measure of social uplift.

292 Rain-clothes The *taghali* or bark cloak used by the Hill Maria for warmth or, primarily, protection against heavy dew and rain, has already been mentioned as deputizing occasionally for the sleeping-mat. Hutton speaks of the Angami Nagas making 'a large hat of leaves and basket work . . . as well as a rain-coat of plaited grass, the ends of which hang out loose, to

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

292 [824]

keep off the water'.[1] The Maria cloak is made from long, thin strips of the bark of the *wara marra* (*Kydia calycina*); when this bark has been well retted in a stream it is pounded, and the long strips peel off like blades of a broad dry grass. They are gathered round the neck into a close plaited yoke over twine strings used for tying it in front, under the chin, and the ends hang loose. It is known as *tarali* to the Bison-horn Marias, some of the remoter of whom also use it. Besides these, the Hill Maria has a large hat of a very flat conical shape, like the Annamese headgear, made of leaves on a bamboo framework, called *reking* (it is almost an umbrella, with the head used as the stick, rather than a hat), and a similar leaf waterproof shield called *dela'iko* for his back and shoulders, in shape like an elongated winnowing fan, or an English dustpan, the enclosed end resting on his shoulders. Similar rain-hats and shields are worn by Gonds and others in various parts of the Central Provinces, though the Maria shapes are distinctive.

291

The account in paragraph 87 of Glasfurd's report obviously refers more to the Marias living 'in the wilder and more unfrequented parts, such as among the valleys of the Baila Deelas and towards the Indrawutty and Kootra [illegible]look' than to the Bison-horn Marias of the Jagdalpur and Dantewara plateaux; the description which follows the words quoted applies far more to the Hill Maria styles of dress and ornamentation than to those in vogue among the Bison-horn Marias either now, or when the *Gazetteer* was prepared in 1907-9, or at the time of certain earlier photographs taken at the end of the nineties when Colonel Fagan was administering the State. Even so far as Glasfurd's remarks apply to Kutru and the Indrawati valley, they strengthen the contention already advanced in this book of the steady spread of Bison-horn culture among villages in the valley once Hill Maria in culture. He notes, however, that towards Bhopalpatnam and Bijapur the Bison-horn Marias are better clad, but gives no detail.

Dress and ornaments: (b) Bison-horn Maria

Their loin-cloth is more ample than that worn in the Abujhmar, and, except when girded up for hunting or work in jungle and field, completely covers their buttocks. It is gathered up into a knot just below the navel, and usually a fold is left, varying in length, to hang down over the piece that has, as with the Hill Marias, been passed tightly over their private parts and between their legs. There is no *toya* or tail behind, consequently, as in the Abujhmar. Towards the Godavari valley the front flap gets very long. The Bison-horn Maria of to-day often wears a mill-made singlet of cotton mesh or gauze, or a '*maskat*', and a coat of some cheap

[1] J. H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, p. 26.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

Bison Horn Maria

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BISON-HORN MARIA DANCERS

PLATE VIII

[Facing p. 78]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

Bison Horn Maria

301 favourite beads. They are fond also of necklaces of small, brightly gilded beads, which they call *mirako-mungya*. They may wear one or two armlets (*dando-bhats*) on one arm above the elbow, or a pair of bracelets on one wrist (*ha'i-bara*), of silver, brass, or aluminium, and similar in type to those bought by the Hill Marias. They wear a plain waist-cord (*para-nori*) instead of the cowry-cord of the hills for carrying knives and tobacco boxes. A comb is attached to this, for regular use. They may have hanging from a fastener of aluminium wire, shaped like the eye of the hooks-and-eyes of ladies' dresses, two thin aluminium toothpicks, and an aluminium ear-scoop; the Hill Marias also use these. They hang like a pendant on the chest.

The women's hair ornaments have been described along with their hair-dressing; it need only be added here that occasionally, instead of the polished brass fillet there mentioned, they wear bead fillets like those of the Hill Maria women. Armlets and wristlets are worn on the same arm, and are similar to those of the hill women. Instead of the white-bead ropes and the coloured-bead collars worn by the hill women, they wear long ropes of red, red and green, or gamboge beads; and over these they wear a vast number of the iron and brass rings of the type already described as borrowed by the hill women from them; they here call the iron neck-rings *tiya*, not *sutia* as in the hills. Their ear plugs are similar to those 301 used in the hills, but from the lobe plug to a ring worn, as by their 304 men, in a hole in the cartilage near the darwinian tubercle, is often fastened a cord on which is threaded between two blue or green beads a slightly oblong, cube-shaped bead of brass or aluminium. The nose is symmetrically adorned by two gold or gilt rings in the wing of each nostril, and, between them, hanging from a small ring in the septum, a small gold or gilt ornament like a leaf pointing downwards, sometimes with a piece of red glass set in the middle.

297 I have taken the wearing of the Bison-horn dancing head-dress
535 as the most obvious distinction between the two kinds of 'Marias'.

Dancing-dress This is known as a *tallagulla*. I had one made from horns and peacock feathers supplied by me. After my head had been measured round the plane of the temples, a basketry 'cap' was made, fitting loosely round the brows, and sloping backwards and upwards into a low peak. It is made loose, 297 as it has to support the horns and the plume of feathers, as well as strings of cowries and many folds and streamers of cloth of various colours, which subsequently tighten it and make it fit snugly round the head. The basketry is of twilled bamboo strips running diagonally from the edge that fits over the brows. The bison-horns were pared with a sharp knife to remove outer dirt or callosities and

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

Bison Horn Maria

PLATE IX

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BISON-HORN MARIA DANCERS AT BAILADILA

Above Four men. (*Photograph by Mr. K. L. B. Hamilton, C.I.E., I.C.S.*)

Below Women. Note the clothes, the masses of ornaments, and the *tirdudi* bamboo dancing-staves

[FACING p. 80]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

many of the places where game of all kinds was plentiful in his father's time. Every Maria has his bow and arrow, the population has multiplied, and miles of jungle have been beaten annually for game in the great spring hunts. Wild buffalo and bison had been so reduced in numbers that they were declared protected thirty years ago, and heavy fines have been imposed for shooting them. The supply of bison-horns is thus not equal to the demand, and the head-dress is therefore a highly prized hereditary possession. No one should try to buy them from their owners; if a specimen is needed, the collector should provide the horns and other materials and see it made up for him. Bison-horns being now rare, and obtainable only from a bison found dead or by purchase from the State Forest Department, various substitutes are being used, such as domestic bullocks' or small buffaloes' horns, wild boars' tushes, the long beaks of the hornbill, and, occasionally, the antlers of the spotted deer (*Cervus axis*). The most interesting substitutes are brass patterned horns, of the shape and size of bison-horns, made by the *cire-perdue* process by the local Gharwa (Ghasia) brass workers.

Except occasional dancing anklets of hollow iron with pebbles inside, the Bison-horn Maria wears no special dancing dress; in fact he girds up his loin-cloth higher than usual and generally discards his singlet or '*waskat*', so as to leave himself as free as possible for his antics, while the heavy drum that he carries slung from his right shoulder across his abdomen necessitates as much freedom as possible.

The women wear no special dancing dress, but put on every available ornament, and carry in their right hands *tirdudi* or bamboo staves to which are fastened bunches of iron pellet-bells, shaped something like short but plump pea-pods, which they clash in time with the drums as they dance by striking their butts on the ground. Similar bells sometimes adorn the drum-stick with which the left hand of the male dancer beats the cowskin membrane at the left end of his drum.

Weapons and tools

The universal *vade mecum* of the Hill Marias is the knife or *kasyaq* carried tucked into the loin-cloth, with or without a wooden sheath. Of this, as of all weapons and tools used by Hill or Bison-horn Marias, it has to be remembered that they are not always made by blacksmiths working exclusively for Marias, but often by blacksmiths in or near the bazaar villages of the plains who cater for Murias, Halbas and other tribes also. The most distinctive types are possibly, in the case of the Hill Marias, those made by the few blacksmiths living in their hills; but there are only slight differences, often of mere

[see cat. 116 p. 419]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

PLATE XV

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HILL MARIA DANCERS

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HILL MARIA DOMESTIC LIFE
Fetching water from river
(Photographs by Baron E. von Eickstedt)

[Facing p. 184]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

535 by a few men with kettle-drums and more with clanging brass gongs; to this babel of sound must be added the clatter of the innumerable iron neck-rings and the bracelets of the girls, and the clangour of the great bunches of bells on the buttocks of the male dancers. The whole scene is lit up by blazing torches and log fires.

535 831 Often a slight element of obscenity is introduced by one or two men dressed as tiger-men with large imitation *membra virilia* which they brandish at each other and at the women, girls and youths, rushing ludicrously here, there, and everywhere, and provoking such laughter that often the dancers have to break off their singing to join in.

535 868 There is no formal dancing teaching. Boys are allowed to join in the dances when they are about six, and girls when nine or ten. They learn simply by imitating their elders.

535 574 Men of all ages, married and unmarried, youths, boys, young wives and girls join in the Bison-horn Maria dances. There appears to be no time of year at which they are forbidden to dance, though naturally the spring and the summer, when they are freest from field-work, see most of their dancing. If at this time of year you invite villagers to dance at your camp, the throb of the drums attracts more and more men and girls from surrounding villages; for the tradition is that no invitation is needed, and that open house should be kept at a wedding or any other occasion when there will be dancing.

2. Bison-horn Maria

535 292 There is no mixing of men and girls as in the Abujhmar hills. The girls, in their ordinary finery of beads and iron and brass neck-rings, and wearing their head snoods and fillets of polished brass, have no special dancing apparatus except the *tirdudi* dancing-sticks ornamented with iron bells which they hold upright in their right hands, clashing the bells in unison by striking the ground with the butts of the sticks on their left front as they bring their left foot across in front of their right; each girl rests her left arm on the back of the left shoulder of the girl on her left. They gyrate to the right, like the Hill Marias, but the Bison-horn women have a far more rapid step; the right foot is moved to the right and slightly to the rear, and the left foot is then brought across the right leg to the right front, while the ground is struck with the butts of the jingling dancing-sticks. The girls in this way dance fast around the outside of the dancing men, sometimes singing as they go; but the unceasing throb of the men's great drums drowns their song.

535 The women's step never varies, whatever the dance; but the men have many different dances and steps, and can improvise a dance on practically any theme, such as asking for pork or *landa*. Their *pen-karsita* or Koqsar dance is a very fast, side-stepping

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

to the Telis, send relays of young men to earn the needed cash by working at Allapilli, and it is noteworthy that these workers do not regard the wages thus earned as their individual property, but as the earnings of the village which sent them there and provided them with food for the journey. Let us hope that the economic self-sufficiency which has hitherto kept these hillmen out of the clutches of the money-lender will be preserved (which means that their *ponda* must not be stopped). They are subject, however, to three pests. The first is the frequently corrupt *kamdar* of the zamindar. The second are the village watchmen or *kotwar*, generally of Mahra or kindred untouchable castes, to whose circles these hill villages are attached. These Mahras have their headquarters in plain villages, whence they make periodic tours of the hill villages to levy various illegal dues from the Hill Marias. The third pest is the itinerant cloth pedlar, usually a Mahra, who supplies cloth on credit and then tries to levy a perpetual tribute in kind. I met one of these men in this tour during my visit to the adjacent Bastar village of Nelanguri. Bazaars are so remote that these pedlars, if they could be prevented from selling on credit, and be made to charge reasonable prices, would fulfil a useful function. All these abuses could be checked by effective official touring: Mr. Kerawala's and my visits were unfortunately red-letter events in the Marias' lives.

Dancing at Kuvakodi was all in the traditional Hill Maria style, but sadly inferior to dances at such Bastar centres as Orcha or Handawada, although at least half the dancers were Bastar Marias. But even in physical type these Marias from the western fringes of the Abujhmar Mountains are inferior. Here, as I noted of Bastar during my March 1934 visit, the Maria dancer has given up the rib-dress or *gatiharhana*, the dancing-shield and the gay head-dress and skirt, though he still retains the traditional buttock-bells, the songs, the *pata-bhita* or 'song fellows' and the dance-steps.[1]

The descent back to the Lahiri camp was almost more tiring than the climb had been. Lahiri that evening was full of an eager crowd, to watch the dancing and partake of the liquor that was ready for the dancers. Here the dancing was lively and vital, but differed in various ways from Hill Maria dancing, if of Hill Maria type. The *dol* drumming was marked, even though the single-membrane *turam* drum, more typical of the Hill Maria was much in evidence. Perhaps, however, the strongest impression was the astonishing wealth of 'jewellery' worn by the girls: enquiry showed that apart from strings of beads, almost all the silver and brass and aluminium necklets, armlets and other trinkets worn by the women had been purchased from metal-workers in Bastar State. There seemed here

[1] See pp. 73-6 and 183-4

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
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Bison-horn Maria youth of Kakker in Hill Maria festival dress

[End Plate D]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

Bison Horn Maria

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Bison horn Maria dancer

[End Plate E]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

Bison Horn Maria

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Bison-horn Marias dancing

[End Plate ZE]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

Plate XXVI

585
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Motiari carrying the crowned bride groom at Sidhawind

585

Bridegroom sitting in the lap of an attendant

[p. 102 (B)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

585 triumph. He dropped a little oil over the boy's head and shoulders, and applied haldi to his body with mango leaves. He was followed by everyone present.

[292]

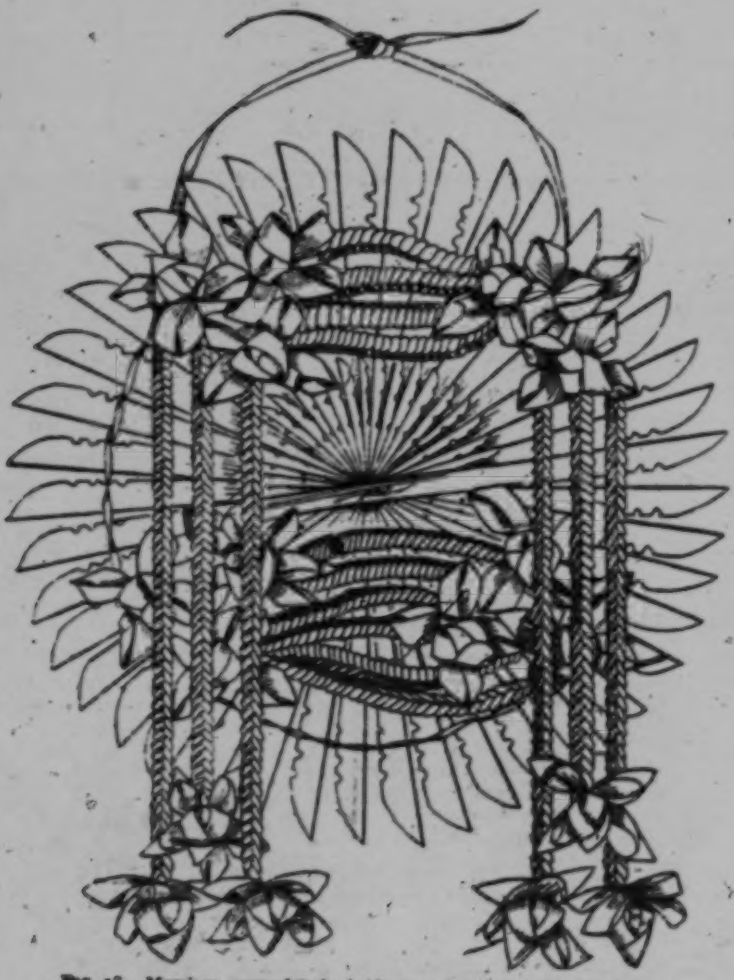

FIG. 18. Marriage crown for the bridegroom made of date-palm leaves
Breadth 1'

Meanwhile, the motiari sang songs about the date-palm, from whose leaves the crowns are made.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

was made by tying poles round the square and criss-cross over it. This was again covered with leafy branches. Round the poles was tied a haldi coloured string, or sometimes simply a rope of paddy-chaff, and a string of mango leaves. This string is called *towas* (Halbi) and is mentioned in another *manda* song. This has the refrain *Rivi loyo virilo virilo riri loyo virilo*, and is addressed apparently to the village mother.

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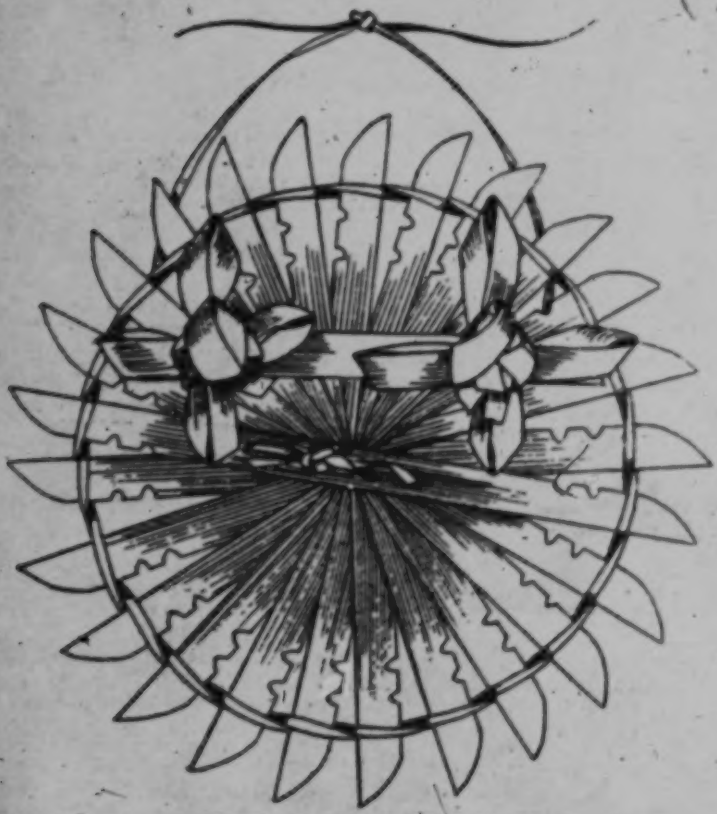

[292]

FIG. 19. Marriage crown for bride
Breadth 6"

Bilo kumulr jobhna dai,
Sukhwa dukhwa koha wo dai.
Gachar machar dyma roy dai?
Kiwjlo tode dyo wo dai?

Haryar manda yatiwo dai.
Tirli tamar lamar wo dai.

O Mother of this young boy,
Reveal his happiness and sorrow.
Why do you stay silent, Mother?
Because nothing has been promised you?
Take our offerings willingly.
He has no brothers, Mother.

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THE COURSE OF MURIA LIFE: YOUTH

585 539

Bavel ẽkí chhẽti;
Chhẽti gala nindoye.
Kãrcha hẽya tala;
Tala gala nindoye.
Kãrwul mẽti danda;
Danda gala nindoye.
Nehẽ jhuloh howa

Danda dole mẽydr.

His chest is a banyan leaf;
His chest too is not yet ripe.
His head is a kadam fruit;
His head is not yet ripe.
His hand too is a tundri root;
His hand is not yet ripe.
O boy, don't shake your hand too much
Or it will be broken, boy.

2

Huh dusẽr dusẽr buba huh dusẽr roy buba

Neyuva dusẽr reha buba.
Kẽnde hẽwar bojha buba.
Reh teke bojha buba,
Teh teke bojha buba.
Nẽwa bojha reha buba.

The haldi oil has been rubbed down, father.
A heavy load for a small *hẽwar*, father.
Its weight is the same though you bring it down,
Its weight is the same though you raise it up.
Bring down the weight, father.

585 Then while a circle of motiari stood singing, others bathed the boy and re-tied his hair in three or four plaits. They decorated him, painting his eyes with black and white powder, and making stars of yellow haldi on his face with a splayed castor-twig. They put a new crown, the Lagir Maur, over his head and face. So attired he went round greeting everyone. A pot of haldi-water was hung from the roof of the booth.

The Lagir

Now the drums began to sound; the chelik moved out in formation from the bridegroom's camp and began to move round the booth. The whole place began to stir. Soon with grand display the bride's drummers came down the road. They were led by two lines of boys waving antlers in the air; one boy was dressed in peacock's feathers, another had a gay cowrie jacket. They advanced, placed the horns on the ground, raised them with loud cries, retired, then came on again. They reached the booth and danced near by.

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The bride's elder sister's husband came out of the house with the bride on his shoulders and a group of men held a canopy over them. A man similarly related brought out the bridegroom from his camp. As the two parties approached the booth, the drumming increased in volume, rows of girls singing and clashing their cymbals followed, a 'bison' appeared pursued by hunters, and a dummy giant whirled into the centre of the scene.

The two parties, the boy's party leading, now went round the booth, outside, seven times anti-clockwise. The drummers went ahead, the girls followed, clouds of dust rose in the air. When this was done, bride and bridegroom were made to stand at the west side of the booth, and their clothes were knotted together. The girl's elder brother and four other men climbed the booth, and poured a little liquor and then a whole potful of haldi-water over the pair. In Malakot, where brooms were tied to the tops of the nine poles, the men threw them down and shook the booth violently.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

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Plate XXXII

[P. 144 (B)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

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Scenes from the Dance of the Ghost

[p. 144 (E)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 A W32 Gond A W32
Muria

THE COURSE OF MURIA LIFE: AGE

The near relatives of the deceased then go into the water crying on the dead to come to them and try to catch any kind of living thing. Whoever first catches a fish or prawn or frog, whatever it may be, is regarded as being specially loved by the dead and is rewarded with extra drinks and small presents. They put the fish into one of the pots together with a ring. The pot is covered with a bamboo cover on which is a new sari. The *ahomāma* relative applies haldi and oil to the pot and as he is doing this someone else catches hold of every member of the party in turn, both men and women, and smears their private parts with haldi-oil. Then a girl (daughter or daughter-in-law to the dead) lifts the pot, puts it on her head, carries it up to the house and puts it down near the Pot of the Departed. A samdhi sacrifices a chicken after testing it in the usual way; when the chicken eats the rice offered it is a sign that the soul of the dead man loves his family as before. Then they pour the water together with the fish and ring on to the ground and tie the ring, which represents the man's soul, from the roof above the Pot of the Departed. Sometimes the ring is tied to a broom. They hang the pot itself up to the roof of the house. They eat the sacrificed chicken and drink and dance and then disperse. A samdhi makes a mixture of the water in which rice has been cleaned, the bark of the mango tree and a little cow's milk and sprinkles the whole house in order to purify it. 769

Some time afterwards, at one of their clan festivals, the members of the family take either the pot or simply the ring that has been hung in the Room of the Departed to the clan shrine or Hanalkot, which must be located at the clan headquarters or at least in some village within the clan territory. In some villages, as at Gudla, this is only done for men; women stay in the house. But at Sirsi the souls of both men and women were taken to the Hanalkot. In Kerawahi they said that at the special festival for Bara Pen, which occurs every two or three years, the members of the Poyami clan take the pots in which the soul has been brought from the river along with the rings to the shrine of their clan god. They sacrifice fowls saying, 'Here is the god of Lanji-Dhamda, go to him and you will become like him. As he helps us, so you too help us'. They tie the ring to a tree overlooking the shrines and break the pot. Then after the usual feast they go home.

Sometimes, however, the people take the soul direct to the Hanal. This is a small shrine for the dead, generally under a saja tree. They put the pot containing the soul and the ring down near the tree and sacrifice two hens, one for the dead man's family and one for his *ahomāma* relatives. They feed these saying, 'Have you come happily today? Don't trouble us, you are to become a god. Always help us and don't trouble us'. When the chickens eat, thus showing that the soul is pleased, a member of the family kills one chicken and a samdhi kills the other. On the place where the chickens are sacrificed, they pour out the water and soul from the pot. They tie the ring by a single thread to the tree thus 'mixing him with the dead'. Everyone who came should have brought a chicken; these are now killed with sticks and roasted. The two sacrificed chickens may only be eaten by those who killed them. They drink liquor and dance and sing, and then go dancing home.

In the Bara Dongar Pargana the Muria have a very impressive death-dance for this occasion. A man wearing a beard of bear's hair, four *gutri*[1] horns tied on his forehead, a fishing-net round his loins, a wooden doll in one hand, a bent stick in the other, leads the way from the river up to the house. In 769 535 [293]

[1] *Cervulus Muntjac*, the barking deer.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

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Gaita of Almer in trance, wearing cowrie jacket

Priest of Pandrawandin at the Kondagaon Mathai

[188a]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

Plate XLIII

791
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Siraha medium at Adner, scourging himself

Siraha treating the author for fever, at Metawand

[p. 208 (A)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

Plate LII

292
535

Hill Maria cholik in dancing dress

[p. 254 (B)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

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Jhoria dancers at Kabonga

Jhoria dancers at Amasara

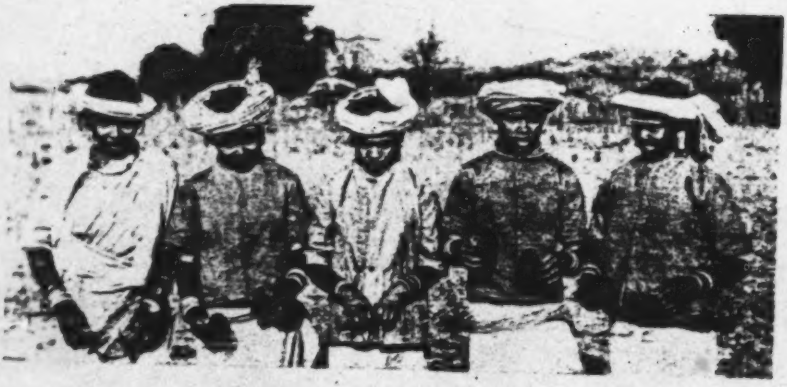

Plate LXXXV

[p.420 (A)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

THE MURIA'S ATTITUDE TO SEX

is a part of the regular ceremonial of a festival or marriage; sometimes it is due to 'supernatural' inspiration.[1]

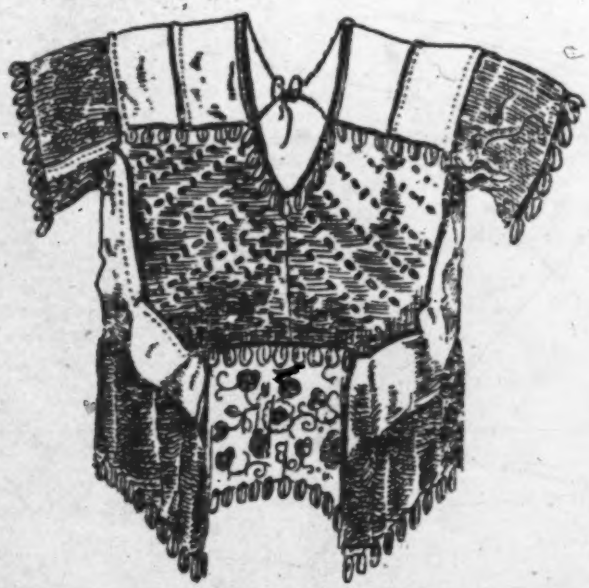

FIG. 115. Lamana woman's jacket adorned with cowries and used by Muria men for the purposes of divination

In Bastar I have noted two forms of this cross-dressing. Men sometimes put on women's jackets adorned with cowries when they go to prophesy in trance before a god and reveal his will to their fellows. At the bigger clan-festivals you may see a dozen or more mediums dancing and gesticulating in a state of ecstatic excitement, all wearing round their bodies these gaily-coloured and rather incongruous blouses.

But this is the only occasion, I think, where the male aboriginals of Bastar put on women's dress. It is more common for women to dress up as men. Bison-horn Maria women of Dantewara sometimes put on male garments at the great Wijja Pandum and drive their men-folk out to the hunt which precedes the main business of the festival. The Muria have the same custom, and the unmarried girls, dressed up as boys, dismiss the men of the tribe for a ceremonial hunt on the success of which will depend the value of the annual harvest.[2]

[1] For the 'Change of Sex' motif in Indian fiction, see Frazer, op. cit., Vol. VII, pp. 231ff. and W. N. Brown, 'Change of Sex as a Hindu Story Motif' in *JAOS*, Vol. XLVII (1927), pp. 3ff.

[2] Thurston speaks of a similar custom among the Koyi, where the women 'dressed in their lords' clothes' drive the men out to hunt at the Bhudevi Pandaga or Festival of the Earth Goddess. He describes a procession held before such a hunt: 'About the middle of the day, we saw a procession approaching as on the previous day, but it consisted entirely of women, the drummers and swordsmen being women dressed up as

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

838 585 292 535 On the third day of a marriage, the motiari retire to the ghotul or their camp and dress up as chelik. They put on turbans, waistcoats and loin-cloths. They borrow boys' armlets for their arms, put knives in their waist-bands, and approach the marriage-booth carrying axes, branches of mango leaves and bunches of *dab* grass. They dance up to the marriage-booth, under which the bridegroom is seated, and ceremonially sweep it. Among the dancers is the bride disguised as a boy. All the dancers are in fact disguised, for they wind their turbans round and round their faces to make it as difficult as possible to tell them apart. As the girls go round and round the booth, they challenge the bridegroom to pick out his bride. He is supposed to be unable to do this, so at last, as the girls draw closer and closer to him, the bride suddenly darts out from among them and hits him on the back with her clenched fist. He jumps up and attempts to hit her back but she escapes and her fellow motiari do their best to protect her. After this the girls continue dancing for some time, then retire to their homes and remove their male disguise.[1]

This practice is called the Nenuldwar, the 'army of the bride and bridegroom', and the dance is the Choli Endanna or the Jhoria Endanna. The name Choli Endanna simply means 'the waistcoat dance' and refers to the male disguise. The word Jhoria probably means lowlander[2] and has been fully explained in Chapter I. It is now no longer used as the title of the tribe, which has become merged with the Muria. There is, however, a Jhorian Pargana or sub-division and it is said that the dance is so called because it originated here. Although the word Jhoria means 'lowlander' in comparison with the Maria of the Abujhmar Mountains, to the Muria and Gond of eastern Bastar it is the name of an older and more primitive people. The expression Jhoria Endanna, therefore, suggests a dance of old time and ancient tradition. It is the most primitive of all the marriage dances.

838 585 535 539 As the motiari approach and dance round the marriage-booth, which they do very slowly in a long straight line, each girl clutching her left-hand neighbour round the neck with one arm, while with the other she waves her bunch of grass and mango leaves to and fro as if she were sweeping a floor, they sing a number of songs. There is a considerable variety of these and I will give a few examples of different kinds. The first song refers to the ceremonial sweeping of the marriage-booth.

Diwān miyār kilinta dewo!	Diwan's daughter is crying, Dewo!
Wāyu dewa wāyu roy dewo!	Come girl, come Dewo!
Wiyār hayu wāyu roy dewo!	Come to sweep, girl, come Dewo!
Naling cao gorāng roy dewo.	The mandia is like aonra fruit.
Gorāng nori ola roy dewoni.	She went to grind the mandia.

men. The chaunt and dance were as before, except that the pantomime abounded in the most indecent gestures and attitudes, all illustrative of sexual relations. One girl slipped (or pretended to) and fell. Whereupon, one of those playing a man's part fell upon her to ravish her. A rescue ensued amidst roars of merriment, and the would-be ravisher was in process of being stripped when our modesty compelled us to call an interval'—Thurston, op. cit., Vol. IV, pp. 66ff.

According to Santal tradition, witchcraft began through a transvestite expedition. Marang Buru had decided to teach men witchcraft, but the women made them drunk and then 'put on pagris and dhoties and stuck goats' beards on their faces' and went to learn the magic art instead.—C. H. Bompas, *Folklore of the Santal Parganas* (London, 1909), p. 422.

[1] At Pardhan marriages in Mandla, the bride is sometimes disguised as a boy and her future husband is challenged to find her. I found a similar test among the Binjhwar of Chhattisgarh. The custom is doubtless widely distributed.

[2] See pp. 15–17.

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2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 A W32 Gond A W32
Muria

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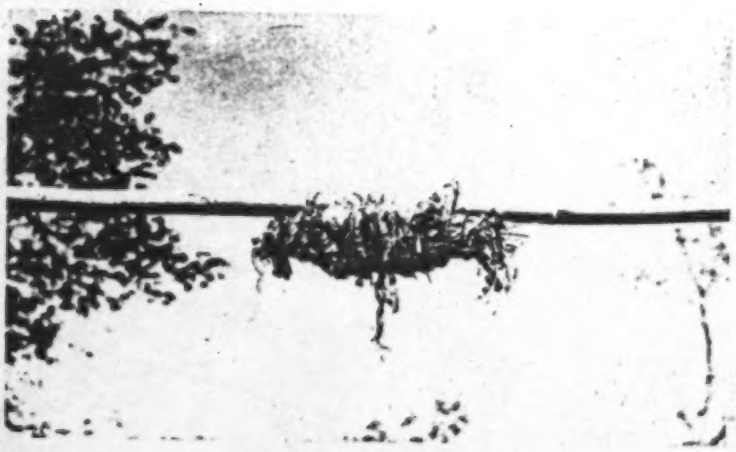

Rubbish hung over the road to purify a village

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Plate LXXXIX

Leader of the Diwali dance

Chelik with sacred fire

[p. 464 (1)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

II. The Pus Kolang Expeditions

The Pus Kolang expeditions undertaken by boys during the Hindu month of Pus (Jan.-Feb.) are among the more serious of the ghotul's annual diversions. Attired in special costume, the chelik visit a number of villages, dancing and singing in honour of Lingo Pen, who is said to have inaugurated the custom. Their behaviour is strictly regulated by rules and taboos; they carry a god with them and sacred fire. Unlike the girls' Diwali dance, there is no sexual purpose behind these expeditions; indeed the strictest taboos are enforced and there is a general sense of danger; everyone has to be very careful; breach of the rules earns catastrophic punishment. 'The dances are for the gods', said the boys at Phulpar. 'We don't feel inclined for girls; besides, many have died for sex at the Pus Kolang.'

This sense of danger probably accounts for the rather haphazard distribution of the custom. In Udanpur, for example, Kurumtalla Pen ordered the chelik not to dance, but they disobeyed; as they left their village, one of the boys died. In Chiyanar, the boys' dog once bit another dog and when they got home a chelik died. In Bhanpuri, the dancers were once warned by a tiger's print in the ashes of the Pus Kolang fire not to go, but they went and a pair of chelik died. Since then they have abandoned the custom altogether. Generally, south of the Narayanpur-Kondagaon road and east of the Keskal-Kondagaon road the Muria do not dance the Pus Kolang, but everywhere in the north it is common. In the Chota Dongar area they say, 'We don't dance it because we are really Maria'. It is significant that in this part the cult of Lingo is at its weakest.

As the cool refreshing season of Pus approaches, the ghotul leaders consult the Gaita about the time and direction of the expedition. They remember the villages where they were well entertained last year; they recall the food they were given and the omens they saw, and they draw up a programme. In the dark half of Pus, they begin to practise. The dances are difficult and must be carefully taught to the younger boys, for it is dangerous to make mistakes. The chelik prepare their clothes, masks and toys. For weeks they study the rhythm of the sticks and the movements of their feet, but always outside the fence of the ghotul compound.

On the first day of the time decided, the chelik light a fire and dance round it. In the morning they examine the ashes; if these are undisturbed or if they are marked by panther, dog or bullock, all is well; if there is the footprint of a man, tiger, cat or hen, it means that Lingo is warning them not to go. In some villages, however, the ashes should not be disturbed at all. Any mark is regarded as a warning. The boys consult the Siraha, who sometimes forbids the expedition altogether and sometimes allows it on certain conditions. The next day they look again, and again on the third day. If for three days the ashes are well-omened they accept the signs and prepare to go.

During this period they have been deciding who are to be the Gain and Jokta, the leaders of the singing; how they are to pair off; they have been getting their clothes and *Lingo-singār* (ornaments) into order. These clothes and ornaments include feminine elements: the boys wear skirts and many necklaces and neck-bands borrowed from the motiari, but I do not think this involves any element of cross-dressing—it is simply due to a desire to be as ornamental as possible.

When Lingo led the chelik on the first Pus Kolang expedition, he took a tiger with him. In memory of this the boys in many villages now take a dog,

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

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Pus Kolang mask

[p. 528 (A)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

Plate CIV

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793

The Malik of the Kongera ghotul in dancing dress

[P. 528 (B)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

throw it behind them as they go. They also tie a little to each drum, pushing the ends of the grass under the strings. As they enter the village, they drum what is called the Bhimul Par or the rhythm in honour of Bhimul, and go once round the marriage-booth. Then they go apart and stack the drums in a row or pile and the leading drummer, who is called the Mandri Guru, offers liquor and the usual gifts of rice, haldi and flour to the drums in the name of Bhimul, Lingo or Danteshwari Matal, according to the local custom, and always in the name of the Dead. 'Let the sounds of the drum be good', they say, 'and let the variety of our dance-steps and rhythms be right. O Mandri Guru Bhimul, as your drum used to sound, so may ours.' As they finish the offerings the boys gather round and each stoops down and catches hold of his drum by its cords; then at a given signal they all together lift the drums into the air and, with a loud cry, sling them across their shoulders and begin to beat them vigorously.

When a drum is broken, the owner asks the Siraha why, and only repairs it after making the appropriate offerings to whatever god or ancestor caused the trouble.

Some of the riddles about this drum are picturesque:

'The seed is outside, the bark inside.'
'In the elephant's stomach buzzes a fly.'
'It cries *tihito*, this bird with no teeth.'
'The bullocks come from Porrobhum [the Upper World] crying *burum burum*.' [1]

IV. Dancing Dress

Chelik and motiari wear no special dancing dress for weddings or any ordinary occasion. They simply put on as many ornaments as they can, stick feathers in their hair and occasionally tattoo their faces with white dots and stars.

Even for festivals the Muria of the east have no special dress and they go out on their Hulki and Dandar expeditions in their ordinary clothes. But the Jhoria have a very elaborate and distinctive dress for the festivals of the clan-god; and the Muria of the north and west wear a special uniform (which I describe elsewhere) for the Pus Kolang and Chait Dandar expeditions. Here I shall confine myself to a description of the Jhoria festival attire, which closely resembles the dancing dress of the Hill Maria.

[1] It is interesting to compare these riddles about drums with those current in other tribes. The following are Uraon:

'A brown cow lows in the middle of a field.'
'The boy who only speaks when beaten.'
'Outside pretty
Inside empty.'
'Put down silent—picked up noisy.'
'The fishes gather when the dry tree is beaten.'

These are Kharia:

'The jack-fruit tree is a tree full of mandri drums.'
'The little fishes gather at the sound of the clouds.'

These are Baiga:

'At the least touch, it growls.'
'An orphan boy with a big belly cries all night.'
'He is brought and hung up. When the crowd gathers, they beat him.'

See Archer, op. cit., pp. 181ff.; Roy, *The Kharias*, pp. 450ff.; *The Baiga*, pp. 464ff.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

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The basis of this dress is a very commonplace shirt and a white skirt with red bands, held in place by a wide sash, all of bazaar cloth. The chelik wear on their heads either turbans tied straight round to make a sort of box or a round cap of bamboo lattice-work covered with red cloth with one end hanging down behind as a streamer. This *topi*, as it is called, is decorated with feathers, cowries, coloured balls borrowed from the motiari and anything else available. When a turban is worn, it is similarly decorated and has one or two long streamers, or strings of cowries hanging down behind.

Round their waists the chelik tie a cord and attach to it bunches of small and big bells which hang above their buttocks.[1] I once saw a boy with a large wooden cow-bell. From the shoulders hangs the very distinctive dancing-shield called *moghi*. This is a circular shield of carved wood or basketwork, with bamboo hoops underneath to support it away from the back and often four smaller hoops of bamboo or brass on the upper side, through which are threaded more streamers of red, white or blue cloth (see Fig. 33).

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Sometimes coloured shawls are thrown over the shoulders spoiling the effect, since they conceal the shields. I have only once seen the older type of Hill Maria 'rib-waistcoat', and that was at Bandopal where the boys covered their waistcoats with folded strips of white cloth so arranged as to look like a series of ribs down the body. Round their necks the boys wear masses of ornaments, many of them borrowed for the occasion from their sisters and cousins.

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Every dancer must carry something over his shoulder. Nowadays this is often an umbrella, though an umbrella decorated with strings of cowries or even bunches of fruit. Traditionally the Hill Maria carried a large pharsa battle-axe over his shoulder: the Muria still sometimes make exaggeratedly large wooden pharsa, carved wooden godel axes, sticks with bunches of peacock feathers tied to the top; the less enterprising carry ordinary pharsa and godel axes and even wooden sticks.

Fig. 138. Iron Jew's harp
Length 3½"

The most interesting objects carried by the Muria for their festival dances are the 'horses', or *kokti* as they are called (Figs. 27, 29). These are roots of trees chosen because their shape roughly resembles the head of a horse, often a fringe of smaller roots being left on the upper side to indicate the mane. This 'horse' is given horns or ears by fixing pointed bits of wood, barking-deer horns, or the tusks of the wild boar to the front of the 'head'. From its nose hang long streamers of white feathers, and the nose itself is often decorated with crisscross patterns. Into the back of the *kokti* are fixed three or four ornamented sticks each with a tuft of feathers at the end. The general effect, specially when a very large number of these 'horses' appear together, is magnificent.

[1] These buttócks-bells, which are characteristic of the Hill Maria, have also been recorded in the Coorg area of the Western Ghats. See M. B. Emeneau, *JAOS*, Vol. LIX, p. 132.

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Plate CXIX

Chelik and motiari of Aturgaon and Kongera doing a variation of the Maria dance

Chelik of Toinar doing samdhi-par

[p.572 (A)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

OTHER RECREATIONS

I. Muria Humour

522 THE humour of the Muria is probably more fully developed than that of any other tribe in Bastar or the Central Provinces; the ghotul is a natural school of wit; the constant association of young people forces them to devise many forms of entertainment. The first and most elementary expression of Muria humour is plain buffoonery. They love throwing dirty water at each other, sprinkling people with red ants, creeping up behind someone and clasping muddy hands round his face. In Nayanar, the chelik had bamboo squirts (Fig. 21) with which they projected streams of water at the motiari. At a marriage, old men and women get great fun out of pouring haldi-water over the buttocks of their relatives as they bend down to greet the bridal pair. They enjoy poking each other's genitals and catching hold of them, and if anyone dances naked, especially if this is in front of forbidden relatives, they laugh till they can hardly stand. The reader will note that here it is the social rather than the sexual aspect of the ribaldry that appeals; it is the notion of doing something unusual and improper before people in whose presence the strictest decorum is usually practised. Jokes about incest are funny because it is almost unknown in Muria society; it is possible to be humorous about adultery simply because it is so rare. The obscene jokes of a Muria marriage do not by any means imply a general standard of obscenity; indeed they suggest the opposite. It is in the most rigidly correct middle classes of English society that the vulgar postcard has its widest circulation, for it is the sense of contrast and incongruity that is amusing. In this connexion George Orwell has recently drawn attention to the difference between obscenity and immorality. The obscene is based on the implication that 'marriage is something profoundly exciting and important, the biggest event in the average human being's life. So also with jokes about nagging wives and tyrannous mothers-in-law. They do at least imply a stable society in which marriage is indissoluble and family loyalty taken for granted...A dirty joke is not, of course, a serious attack upon morality, but it is a sort of mental rebellion, a momentary wish that things were otherwise.'[1] So, in this sense Muria jokes are obscene, but they are not immoral.

522 ●292 The Muria get a great deal of fun out of dressing up. At weddings, especially at the critical moment of the Lagir, many people—both young and old—appear in fantastic array. One man performs as a giant; another has an enormous rope penis; a third is covered with ash and goes about imitating the Siraha-mediums. In Malakot the villagers were highly amused at the antics of an old man dressed in a bear-skin who was led about by his keeper, himself swathed from head to foot in paddy-rope. The village headman, ordinarily the soberest of beings, appeared riding a hobby-horse and flourishing an umbrella. At Sidhawand there was a 'sadhu' with a long tail and an ash-covered fisherman who burlesqued Muria fishing methods. Masks are sometimes worn, especially during the Pus Kolang and Chherta expeditions. In Kachora two boys wearing gourd masks played at man and wife, the wife causing great mirth by a pair of artificial breasts. In Phulpar a chelik wore an artificial beard of squirrel's hair which he combed before a mirror. In

[1] G. Orwell, 'The Art of Donald McGill', *Horizon*, Vol. IV (1941), pp. 153ff.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

522 Gorma, the Muria Atpariha dressed up as a straw man, with a whitened face
● 292 and beard of bear's fur. He carried about an enormous bow and a wooden spade as arrow. Even an old solar topi is thought amusing—when it is on a chelik's head. The desire to create a sharp dramatic contrast prompted a Muria at Masora to dance with a dog in his arms (Plate CXLIII).

522 But beside a delight in sudden contrasts, the Muria have a special attraction to the grotesque. In one story a girl with a huge umbilical stump buries herself in the bed of a river, but the stump sticks up and a bullock cart is caught on it. The first motiari had a vagina so large that a wild boar could roll about in it. She looked like a sack of salt from Nandgaon. In a song, a boy has a penis as long as a cucumber and testicles as fat as pumpkins.

In Gorma I saw an extraordinary dance, when the performer, distorting his face and body, pranced about the ghotul like an obscene bird. With his hand he poked his bottom, privates, chest and head, smelt his supposedly soiled and stinking fingers, then pushed them in the faces of the onlookers. It was done so well that you forgot the indecency in a sort of horror as at some perverted creation of the mind. In the same category are the 'panthers' or 'lizards' that so often appear at a dance or wedding. A boy covers himself with a blanket, and with an ingenious arrangement of twigs makes himself a head and beak which opens and shuts. He then crawls about in what I can only call an abominable manner which never fails to give a thrill of fear.

More purely humorous was a great bird made at Phauda. A chelik lay on the ground with his hands stretched out before him. The others covered his body with a blanket and his hands with cloth. They decorated the cloth-covered hands with ornaments, gave them a beak and ears, and produced a grotesque bird. Then the boy by moving his hands made the bird peck about very divertingly (Plate CXLVII).

If we turn to verbal wit we find a similar tendency. In the songs are references to moustached peacocks[1] and tusked hares.

[539] On Kachgudgud Hill is a hare, chelik.
Its teeth are as long as a chopper, chelik.
Its moustache is like jungle grass, chelik.
Its hairs like bamboo shavings, chelik.

In the Ghotul Pata there are many such diverting descriptions. How excellent, for example, is the account of the Kotwar who is fed on gruel twelve years old and full of frogs and lizards[2]

[539] His moustaches said *suyi suyi* as he drank,
His throat cried *gurgur gurgur*.
As he ate the frogs and lizards, his mouth went *pitos pitos*.

The descriptions of the chelik and motiari at Siri Somni's marriage and of the treatment given to Bai Dursal Rani by the Manjhi[3] are funny even to Western ears.

[1] Compare the Uraon poem:

The cobra comes
With his hood raised
Asking alms.
The heron comes
With his neck straight
Twirling his moustaches. (Archer, op. cit., p. 122.)

[2] The antics of the village Kotwar are a favourite theme of the Gond and Pardhan story-teller in the Central Provinces. See my *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal*, pp. 88f., 108f., and Elwin and Hivale, *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills* (Bombay, 1944), pp. 372ff.

[3] See p. 608.

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Plate CXLV

Dancer dressed in peacock's feathers

A dummy giant at Sidhawand

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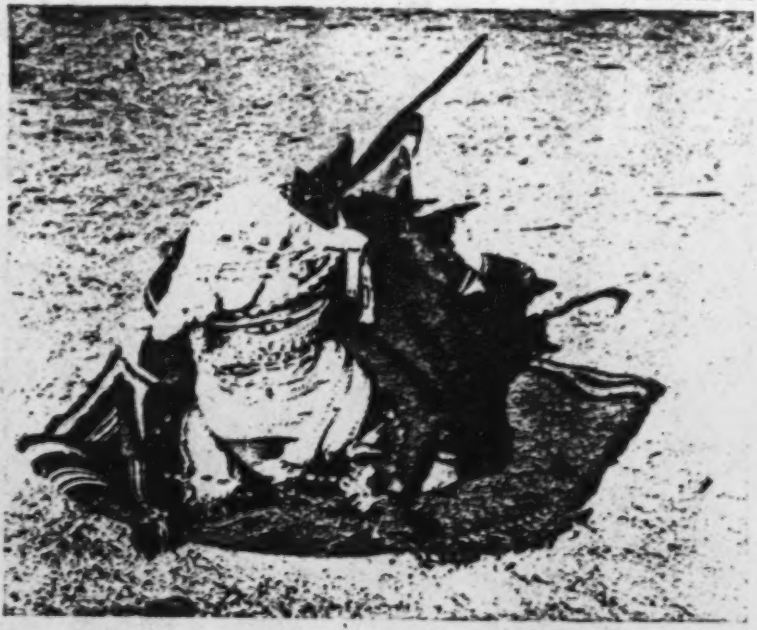

A chelik at Phauda dressed up as a monstrous bird

The chelik reveals himself

[p. 650 (a)]